WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1   1. A method comprising:

2   a) accepting search query information including a word;

3   b) determining one or more words related to the word included in the

4   accepted search query;

5   c) generating an item request including

6   i) the word included in the accepted search query, and

7   ii) the one or more words determined to be related to the word

8   included in the accepted search query;

9   d) retrieving items using the item request; and

10   e) applying each of the retrieved items to a performance threshold,

11   wherein the performance of any items retrieved on the basis of the one or

12   more words determined to be related to the word included in the accepted

13   search query is applied to a higher performance threshold than the

14   performance threshold used for any items retrieved on the basis of the

15   word included in the accepted search query.

1   2. The method of claim 1 wherein the act of applying each of the retrieved items

2   to a performance threshold includes adjusting the performance threshold for any

3   items retrieved on the basis of the one or more words determined to be related to

4   the word included in the accepted search query.

1   3. The method of claim 2 wherein the act of adjusting the performance threshold

2   includes multiplying a first performance threshold by a multiplier that is greater

3   than one.

1   4. The method of claim 3 further comprising:

2   f) updating the multiplier using performance information.

1   5. The method of claim 4 wherein the items are ads.

1   6. The method of claim 5 wherein the performance information includes ad
2   selection information.

1   7. The method of claim 5 wherein the performance information includes ad
2   conversion information.

1   8. A method comprising:
2   a) accepting search query information;
3   b) determining relevant items using the search query information and item
4   targeting information, wherein the act of determining each relevant item
5   includes associating the items with a confidence measure; and
6   c) applying each of the relevant items to a performance threshold,
7   wherein for a given item, the performance threshold is a function of the
8   confidence measure associated with the determination of relevance of the
9   item.

1   9. The method of claim 8 wherein the performance threshold increases as the
2   confidence measure decreases.

1   10. The method of claim 8 wherein the performance threshold decreases as the
2   confidence measure increases.

1   11. The method of claim 9 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the
2   performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.

1   12. The method of claim 10 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the
2   performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.

1   13. The method of claim 9 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the
2   performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.

1   14. The method of claim 10 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the

2   performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.

1   15. The method of claim 8 wherein the act of determining relevant items uses

2   the search query information, item targeting information, and at least one match

3   function, and wherein the confidence measure is determined based on the at

4   least one match function used in the act of determining relevant items.

1   16. The method of claim 15 wherein the performance threshold increases as the

2   confidence measure decreases.

1   17. The method of claim 15 wherein the performance threshold decreases as

2   the confidence measure increases.

1   18. The method of claim 16 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the

2   performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.

1   19. The method of claim 17 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the

2   performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.

1   20. The method of claim 16 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the

2   performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.

1   21. The method of claim 17 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the

2   performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.

1   22. Apparatus comprising:

2   a) an input for accepting search query information including a word;

3   b) means for determining one or more words related to the word included

4   in the accepted search query;

5   c) means for generating an item request including

6   i) the word included in the accepted search query, and

7   ii) the one or more words determined to be related to the word

8   included in the accepted search query;

9   d) means for retrieving items using the item request; and

10   e) means for applying each of the retrieved items to a performance

11   threshold, wherein the performance of any items retrieved on the basis of

12   the one or more words determined to be related to the word included in

13   the accepted search query is applied to a higher performance threshold

14   than the performance threshold used for any items retrieved on the basis

15   of the word included in the accepted search query.

1 23. The apparatus of claim 22 wherein the means for applying each of the

2 retrieved items to a performance threshold include means for adjusting the

3 performance threshold for any items retrieved on the basis of the one or more

4 words determined to be related to the word included in the accepted search

5 query.

1 24. The apparatus of claim 23 wherein the means for adjusting the performance

2 threshold include means for multiplying a first performance threshold by a

3 multiplier that is greater than one.

1 25. The apparatus of claim 24 further comprising:

2   f) means for updating the multiplier using performance information.

1 26. The apparatus of claim 25 wherein the items are ads.

1 27. The apparatus of claim 26 wherein the performance information includes ad

2 selection information.

1 28. The apparatus of claim 26 wherein the performance information includes ad

2 conversion information.

1 29. Apparatus comprising:

2   a) an input for accepting search query information;

3   b) means for determining relevant items using the search query

4   information and item targeting information and for associating the items

5   with a confidence measure; and

6   c) means for applying each of the relevant items to a performance

7   threshold, wherein for a given item, the performance threshold is a

8   function of the confidence measure associated with the determination of

9   relevance of the item.

1 30. The apparatus of claim 29 wherein the performance threshold increases as

2 the confidence measure decreases.

1 31. The apparatus of claim 29 wherein the performance threshold decreases as

2 the confidence measure increases.

1 32. The apparatus of claim 30 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the

2 performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.

1 33. The apparatus of claim 31 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the

2 performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.

1 34. The apparatus of claim 30 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the

2 performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.

1 35. The apparatus of claim 31 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the

2 performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.

1 36. The apparatus of claim 29 wherein the means for determining relevant items

2 use the search query information, item targeting information, and at least one

3   match function, and wherein the confidence measure is determined based on the

4   at least one match function used by the means for determining relevant items.

1   37. The apparatus of claim 36 wherein the performance threshold increases as

2   the confidence measure decreases.

1   38. The apparatus of claim 36 wherein the performance threshold decreases as

2   the confidence measure increases.

1   39. The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the

2   performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.

1   40. The apparatus of claim 38 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the

2   performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.

1   41. The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the

2   performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.

1   42. The apparatus of claim 38 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the

2   performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.